

ABR Caseload Impact of Reviewing All Hillside Projects Regardless of Slope

The current Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance requires all Hillside Design District (HDD) projects on parcels with more than 20% slope to receive ABR review, whereas projects under 20% slope may or may not go depending on whether they meet the criteria on the NPO Checklist. Because slope varies throughout the HDD, some parcels with greater than 20% slope are located adjacent to parcels with less than 20% slope. This can lead to different design review requirements for similar projects in the same neighborhood, which can be perceived as unfair. One means of addressing this perceived unfairness is to require all HDD projects to be reviewed by the ABR, regardless of slope. Under this proposal, HDD addition projects currently exempt under NPO 10, 11, 12 or 13 would be reviewed by the ABR. In 2003, 52 HDD addition projects were exempt under one of these NPO Checklist items. Sitework and alteration projects currently exempt would also now be subject to ABR review.

Staff does not know exactly how many HDD sitework and alteration projects were exempt in 2003 because this information was not always listed in Permit Plan data. To estimate the number of additional HDD sitework and alteration projects at ABR in 2003, Staff first estimated the number of sitework and alteration projects that received ABR review in 2003, as described in Issue Paper J: Part II, Attachment 6.

To determine an estimate of the number of alteration and sitework projects with less than 18% slope, Staff found the ratio of estimated sitework and alteration projects to the number of HDD parcels with 18% slope or greater. This ratio was then applied to the number of HDD parcels with less than 18% slope to obtain an estimated 230 additional HDD sitework and alteration projects at ABR in 2003.

If 500 parcels were added to the HDD as well, the additional design review caseload is estimated to be 250 projects rather than 230. This estimate was obtained by finding the ratio of the estimated number of hillside projects exempt from design review in 2003 to the total number of HDD parcels. This ratio was then applied to the proposed number of HDD parcels, yielding an estimated 250 sitework and alteration projects. Added to the 56 HDD extra addition projects, this equals 306 projects that would have been added to the design review caseload in 2003, effectively, over an 80% increase in caseload.

Conclusion. Originally, reviewing projects both under 20% and over 20% within the Hillside Design District appeared as a “fair” and “consistent” way to review HDD projects. For example, it could seem odd to a neighbor with an 22% slope that they would be required to have a reroof reviewed by Staff, but that their next door neighbor, with a 17% slope would not. The Steering Committee and Staff agreed that changing the HDD purview to include all applicable projects within in it’s boundaries, rather than just the projects on sites over 20% slope would solve this issue.

However, Staff and ABR review resources are finite. The research documented above makes it clear that addressing the HDD issue in this way could significantly detract from efforts to review all two-story home additions in the Infill areas. It appears the problem

of many two-story homes not being reviewed by the ABR in the Infill area is more important to address at this time than projects on less than 20% slope lots in the HDD. An 80% increase in Hillside Design District projects as well as reviewing all two-story projects in Infill areas does not appear feasible to Staff.

Alternatively, Staff recommends the following.

- Infill routing standards would apply to properties less than 20% slope in the HDD. That is, 2-story projects and projects over 4,000 square feet would be subject to Design Review.
- Re-roof projects would be the only other type of project which Staff would review within the HDD for properties with slopes < 20%. Re-roof projects are very noticable in a neighborhood and also relatively easily reviewed by Staff. This proposal would add approximately 50 reroof projects to the approximately 60 reroof cases currently reviewed by Staff per year.

Since administrative reroof application reviews are not especially time-consuming, this proposal appears feasible. As a result, the “fairness” and “consistency” issue would be solved for one of the most noticeable categories of projects within the Hillside Design District without needing to sacrifice competing Infill two-story review priorities.